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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore some of the cultural similarities and differences between West Indian immigrants and other Canadians. In particular, the accent is on providing information that will, hopefully, be of use to school teachers trying to understand the problems West Indian pupils face in the Canadian school system. The contents of the report on this study are organized in seven chapters, as follows: (1) "Why West Indians?" comprising discussions of the purpose and limitations of the study; (2) "West Indian Society," including discussions of the topics of the community and the family, education, language, religion, emigration, and immigration; (3) "The Immigrant," including discussions concerning expectations, the actuality--the reception by the Natives, status reduction, family stresses--including working women, education, and the immigrant child caught in the middle; (4) "The Natives," which discusses "their general reaction," and employers and fellow employees; (5) "The Immigrant Child and the School," including discussions of educational level, academic evaluation, and cultural bias in tests; (6) "Language and West Indian Immigrants to Canada," which includes discussions of dialect and standard English, and misunderstandings; and (7) "The Issue of Integration," which discusses such topics as the child, the parents, and fostering integration. (JM)

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PROJECT NO. 2  
WEST INDIANS IN TORONTO:  
THE STUDENTS AND THE SCHOOLS  
MERS LEARNER  
CHARACTERISTICS COMMITTEE

The Board of Education  
for the Borough of York

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## **WEST INDIANS IN TORONTO:**



## **THE STUDENTS AND THE SCHOOLS**

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## I

WHY WEST INDIANS?Introduction

Each year the government of Canada produces columns of statistics stating how many immigrants have arrived in the country and the parts of the world they hail from. In addition, stored away in the federal data banks is information about their skills, their socio-economic level, their marital status, the size of their families and innumerable other facts about the thousands of people who swell the population each year.

Unfortunately these figures, invaluable as they are to statisticians, obscure the unique configuration of experience, prejudice, sensitivities expectations, frustrations, hopes and longings that is each individual immigrant.

There is no average immigrant, just as there is no average native-born Canadian. These entities are statistical myths. Even when we narrow our scope to a select group of immigrants, coming from one small and comparatively homogenous area, and actively strive to empathize with the experience of being uprooted and with the impact of cultural shock we must inevitably fail.

What then is our justification for singling out a group and making statements which can never be more than generalizations? Simply this: That by acquainting ourselves with the background of an immigrant group, we hope to gain insight into the subjective experiences of members of the group and, through this insight, an understanding of the peculiar problems that group faces.

This study is concerned with the West Indian immigrant to Canada. More especially it focuses on the West Indians who have settled in Toronto and those West Indian children who attend school in the Borough of York. This is not because West Indians necessarily have more or fewer problems of acculturation and adjustment than other immigrant groups - a similar study could be made of Italian immigrants, Greeks or Ukrainians, and in each case problems peculiar to that group would undoubtedly be found.

The West Indian immigrant occupies a special place because, on the surface, Canadians have more in common with West Indians in terms of a common heritage and language than with many European immigrants. In the West Indies, as in Canada, the British influence is everywhere apparent and English is the predominant language. It is a curious fact that, despite this, cultural and linguistic differences are most often cited when the difficulties faced by West Indians adjusting to Canadian ways are discussed.

It is possible that the similarities obscure understanding between the West Indian immigrant and the native-born Canadian. Initially both parties may be too certain they understand the life-style of the other. The West Indian immigrant, confronted with obvious differences in the Canadian outlook, rapidly is disillusioned, but the Canadian, insulated by his majority position, is likely to remain under the misapprehension that he understands the West Indian.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore some of the cultural similarities and differences between West Indian immigrants and other Canadians. In particular the accent is on providing information that will, hopefully, be of use to school teachers trying to understand the problems West Indian pupils face in the Canadian school system.

#### Limitations of the Study

At the outset we must warn that speculation abounds and rigorously acquired data is sparse. There are few Canadian studies of the West Indian immigrant. We have, therefore, been forced to rely heavily on the experiences of West Indians in Britain, supplementing this material with work that has been done on Canadian attitudes, linguistic data, and impressions gleaned from interviews with Toronto teachers who have worked with West Indian children and from interviews with West Indian immigrants.

The resulting picture cannot hope to be complete. Hopefully, however, it will assist some teachers to gain insight into the problems of their West Indian students; and perhaps into their own attitudes, and lay a foundation for an educational edifice that caters adequately to the needs of new Canadians.

## II

WEST INDIAN SOCIETY

It is one thing to grasp intellectually that different countries have different customs but it is quite a different matter to face the cultural shock of immersion in the alien ways of a foreign land. Customs which one previously considered universal are abruptly shown to be quaint foibles; values which one thought absolute and beyond challenge become merely relative.

Even the most sophisticated and best educated immigrant may be disoriented by culture shock. The rural, semi-literate immigrant finds his entire identity challenged and his ego structure shaken. At every turn alien attitudes and practices assault him.

The impact of culture shock on the West Indian entering countries such as Britain and Canada is all the greater because he usually considers that despite differences in technical sophistication there is a common cultural heritage.

The immigrant is rapidly disillusioned. Those cultural similarities that do exist are completely overshadowed by dissimilarities in such central spheres as social attitudes, education, language and religion.

When we examine the fabric of West Indian society the potential for culture shock becomes obvious. Nor is it sufficient to describe the differences: a mild form of culture shock may obscure our understanding of the significance and function of West Indian customs and attitudes unless we consider their evolution in some detail.

The Community and The Family

One important area which illustrates the different attitudes found in cultures is illegitimacy. In the West Indies illegitimate births are regarded very differently from the prevailing Canadian attitude.

Davison quotes figures from a 1960 Jamaican census: Of the total female population of that island, 43% were classified as single 29% were married, and 19% were living in common-law relationships, while of all the females over 15, 70% had borne a child.

Despite this fecundity, of all the females over 15, only one-third were living with a legal husband, 21% had never lived with a partner, 22% were living with a common-law partner and 24% had lived with a common-law partner at some time, but were not doing so at the time of the census.

The reason for what appears to be a light-hearted approach to the matter of child-bearing may be found in the historical evolution of West Indian society. Slave-owners discouraged and often forbade marriage among slaves because there were restrictions on breaking up families based on recognized marriage forms, and because the owners often wished to breed slaves selectively for what they considered to be desirable characteristics.

As a result, says Davison, "Marriage as a social institution is regarded as an... ideal by many of the women in Jamaica today and little or no social stigma is experienced by the unmarried girl who becomes pregnant in her late teens."

The illegitimate child is cared for by the maternal grandmother in most cases, while the mother works to support the child and herself.

Many West Indian children who grow up in this type of home hold attitudes towards the mother that to us seem exaggerated. Mothers and grandmothers have dominated their emotional lives and provided for their material needs, supplanting the role normally played by the father in our culture. Women are the breadwinners and the managers of family finances. Consider the implications of the famous phrase coined by Barbadian novelist George Lamming: "My mother who fathered me."

Illegitimate children are not necessarily conceived carelessly nor are common-law unions entered into lightly. The common-law union in many West Indian lands is an institutionalized method by which a woman forms a relationship with a man that may eventually lead to marriage.

There are different forms of these unions and during her lifetime a woman may experience several different relationships ranging from casual liaisons to enduring pairings and recognized forms of marriage.

One common type of union is "faithful concubinage", a common-law relationship between a man and a woman. These relationships may last for a lifetime, but both partners retain a high degree of individual freedom and may terminate the relationship at will. The man has no legal responsibility towards the woman and vice versa. Money earned by either partner belongs to that partner. Quite often these relationships end in legal marriage.<sup>24</sup>

When partners in such a relationship separate, a temporary relationship sometimes is formed, known as a companionate or keeper arrangement. In return for shelter and sustenance for herself and her children, the woman agrees to live with a man and become his "companion" or "housekeeper". In these associations partners change frequently and they provide a much less stable environment for children.

The high degree of unemployment and job insecurity in the West Indies has made men unwilling to assume the responsibilities of matrimony. It should not be assumed these transitory relationships reflect a fickleness in West Indian men. In fact, according to one source, most West Indians do marry - but often long after their children are born.

The pattern often changes when West Indians migrate. In Britain many common-law unions, some first formed in the West Indies, were legalized within a few years of the couples living in the new society. Apart from social pressures to conform to British customs, the migrants often found themselves financially secure for the first time in their lives, making a legal union feasible. "There can be no doubt that the majority of Jamaicans very quickly change their attitude when they migrate to England and couples who would have lived together indefinitely in Jamaica without marrying, legalize their relationship quite quickly after they arrive in Britain."<sup>5</sup>

Although we do not have comparable figures for the incidence of illegitimate births and common-law unions among West Indians in Canada, it appears a similar pattern exists here, modified (possibly considerably) by the more restrictive Canadian immigration policy that weeds out the unskilled and the uneducated. If West Indians in Canada over-represent the middle class, as immigration restrictions here would seem to dictate, one would expect a rate of illegitimacy among the immigrants which is lower here than in England.

Both sexes are brought up to respect marriage and believe in an authoritarian home ruled by the father, but, in fact, the frequent absence or failure of the father to make a success of his role results in the mother running the family. Occasionally hostilities erupt into short, sharp outbreaks of violence.

Mothers and daughters are very close, as are sisters. Such a female group often co-operates in raising a family. Sons may be particularly close to their mothers, especially if the mother has been the only effective parent. They tend to be husband-substitutes for single mothers and support them, ask them for advice and allow them to wash and cook for them up to any age.

West Indian men are very sentimental about their "old lady" and she often has as much influence as the wife or girl-friend. A middle-aged man whose mother has died may call himself an "orphan".<sup>8</sup>

The dominant role of the mother and the frequent absence of a father figure may account for some of the observed differences in child-rearing practices between West Indian and Canadian society.

To the Canadian eye discipline is applied inconsistently with a mixture of extreme strictness and extreme permissiveness. Babies are fed on demand and, as they are skimpily dressed and spend much of their time outdoors, toilet training tends to be easy and relaxed.

By contrast older children may be severely punished for not behaving themselves or for rudeness. Being "rude" covers virtually any form of misbehaviour from trivial disobedience to criminal activities. It is punished by sometimes slapping and cuffing, but a violent scolding accompanied by blood-curdling threats which are seldom carried out also is common.

The emphasis on discipline is typical of the West Indian classroom as well. Pupils stand when the teacher enters the room, and remain standing until he is seated. This is true, even in secondary school. A casual or joking relationship with one's teacher is almost unheard of, and would be taken to signify lack of respect for an adult.

The current western attitude that children are a species apart with special attributes all their own is not prevalent in the West Indies. Instead children are regarded as little adults who differ from grown-ups chiefly in that they cannot do all the things adults do.

Rural children in the West Indies lead a demanding life. Girls help with the house-keeping and look after the smaller children as well as running errands. Boys work in the fields, look after stock and collect wood. These demands take their toll from the age of 12 on. Boys tend to drop out of school, partly because their labour has become so important to the family, and partly because they feel school is irrelevent to the "real life" business of earning a living.<sup>24</sup> School-leaving age may be 16 years, as in Barbados, but there is little attempt to enforce it above the age of 12.

When it comes to educating their children West Indians also appear to an outsider to be ambivalent. Superficially parents appear to profess great respect for education while taking few active steps to ensure their children's academic success.

Once again, the outsider is easily misled.

### Education

Because education is the key to escaping from back-breaking manual labour and permanent poverty, West Indian parents often are fiercely determined their children should do well at school. However, they often do not have the personal experience to appreciate how difficult academic tasks can be for a child from a rural, pre-industrial background, to understand the amount of time needed for homework and preparation, or to create the sort of home environment that favours academic progress. Parents' attitudes toward school and the teacher is likely to be one of complete faith that the educational process will take place in the school; that teachers can be depended upon to instill needed facts and ideas in their children; and that parents need not involve themselves in a field which has its experts - the school personnel.

As a result the child may be scolded for doing poorly at school, while the parents continue to insist he perform his full quota of chores around the house, and provide neither the time nor privacy necessary for him to pursue his studies.

After professions, parents would like to see their children acquire a trade and become carpenters, electricians or mechanics. Again the home environment often does not provide a suitable background. There may be few mechanical toys or tools to manipulate and the child may not learn manual dexterity. According to Jones, there are many self-styled

skilled tradesmen practising their crafts in the West Indies whose work is very poor.<sup>8</sup>

West Indian education until recently has tended to ignore West Indian history and geography, politics (elections are not discussed at school), and industrial and technological needs. Instead in secondary school and university the student is taught English Literature, Latin, world geography and history and French or Spanish.

Schools are badly crowded and under-equipped. An English visitor to Jamaica in the early 1950's had this to say about a rural primary school he visited:

"(The school was) a long room divided into three sections by low cupboards, thus making three classrooms in each of which some 70 children were crammed. The iron-framed desks, really designed for two, held four pupils."

Because of this sort of over-crowding children often are turned away. Because of the lack of funds the teaching aids may consist of a blackboard for the teacher and slates for the students. In clement weather classes may be conducted outside.

In a report published in 1972, Carrington described a study of the results of crowding in primary schools in Trinidad-Tobago. He reported to the Institute of Education of the University of the West Indies that the overcrowding resulted in harsh discipline, little opportunity for pupil discussion, questions, or expression of pupil opinion, children who unquestioningly accepted the opinions of the teachers and "who have never been allowed to develop self-discipline, so that as soon as the teacher's back is turned they are transformed into a bunch of wild and noisy infants who are rejoicing after a long spell of repression."<sup>29</sup>

The best of teachers would find such inadequate facilities a handicap. West Indian teachers fall far short of that mark. In a few islands, such as Barbados which supplies many teachers to other West Indian countries, standards are comparatively high, but it is more usual to find teachers whose own basic education has been neglected and who have had little or no formal training in education.

In Jamaica, for instance, many teachers in rural schools graduated from the same schools and then wrote a few elementary examinations before being hired. (Teacher training is improving and good teachers' colleges exist.) Teaching is a highly coveted profession simply because white-collar jobs are so difficult to come by.

Teachers tend to perpetuate the archaic teaching methods they were exposed to. Discipline is strict - the overcrowded classrooms leave little choice - the accent is on rote learning work and passivity is encouraged. In large classes - 40-45 students typify an average class - participation cannot be general and frequent, and an authoritarian teaching style and a passive learner style are functional. School uniforms, codes of behaviour and other rules and regulations emphasize the authoritarian nature of the school.

While these remarks apply to the majority of schools and teachers the acquisition of an education traditionally depends on money and colour - more of one usually means less of the other. There are good, mediocre, and very poor schools in the West Indies. Money and a good education go together.

Many anachronisms have survived until quite recently. In Jamaica for instance, illegitimate children could not attend school until 1940. (It is questionable whether this rule was very often enforced.) As a very large number of children of African descent are illegitimate this discriminated grossly against dark-skinned children.

Although teacher training now is being improved and the educational system is being overhauled to make curricula more relevant to local needs, the task is far from complete in many West Indian countries. In a document called "New Deal for Education in Independent Jamaica," the government outlines its hopes to achieve the following goal by 1980: free junior secondary education for all. (Junior secondary school is for children from 12-16 years old.) Other goals to be met by 1980: "compulsory education in an island - wide basis between the ages of 6-15; all or nearly all teachers in primary or secondary schools to be trained and qualified; (and) reduction in size of classes in primary school." The Jamaican government is obviously aware of the educational needs of the island; whether it can fill these, and meet its own objectives by 1980 is uncertain.<sup>32</sup>

The majority of West Indian schools follow an outmoded British pattern of education. The school structure is extremely authoritarian.

Quick computational skills are emphasized and mathematics is taught in traditional turn-of-the-century fashion. New maths generally is not taught. Those schools which do have libraries do not have very extensive book selections, which means that many West Indian children lack researching skills. (Mobile libraries help, but they do not provide the constant resource centre that a school library is.)

On the other hand despite their deficiencies in equipment and curricula, the teachers are drawn from the community and are easily approached. In religious schools the headmaster usually also is a church official and his dual role fosters further contact with the community.

Parents may not feel competent to involve themselves in educational matters per sé, but if they do wish to discuss their child's progress the teachers are approachable members of the community who share fully in community life. This closeness does not exist between home and school in Canada; and many West Indian parents hesitate to contact a teacher here for fear their interest in their child's progress or their concern for his well-being will be interpreted as implicit criticism of the teacher, and will result in subtle reprisals on the child. Conversely, parents often play an active role in raising funds to buy equipment for the schools and, at least in this respect, live close to the educational process.

### Language

In the West Indian countries that concern us most the language is nominally English. However, Creole, a patois or dialect, is the language of the common man and his command of standard English\* is often minimal.

Language has extensive implications socially and educationally and the change from a dialect-speaking society to a society that speaks

\* as spoken in Canada "Standard English" throughout this paper refers to what, following the British labeling system, we could call "CBC English."

standard English is perhaps the single greatest hurdle the emigrant faces.

Culture shock again looms large - a shock experienced both by the immigrant and the standard English-speaking native who hears a West Indian dialect for the first time.

The immigrant discovers that he does not have the command of English he prided himself on, while the native associates stupidity, illiteracy and social undesirability with the dialect and often finds it far harder to accept than an out-and-out foreign language.

We will suggest at various times that dialects should be considered foreign languages rather than varieties of English. The reason is that aberrant varieties of standard English too often carry undesirable connotations and are tolerated by the standard English speaker less easily than a foreign language.

West Indian dialects are effective means of communicating in the lands where they flourish and should be viewed as complete, functioning tools, adapted to a different environment not as deficiencies.

Every West Indian island has its own dialect, formed from blends of the original African languages with European tongues. In islands which were controlled by the French - St. Lucia, Dominica, and parts of St. Vincent and Grenada - the French language is the basis of the patois or Creole.

In the islands we are primarily concerned with, although the French did not rule them, there always were a number of French settlers. Thus the patois of Jamaica includes French terms and the Creole of Trinidad uses French and Spanish forms.

Barbados on the other hand, because of its exclusively English background, has a dialect which is more like an archaic form of English than anything else.

The West Indian emigrating to Canada may have trouble understanding Canadians and even more trouble in being understood. Standard English is usually a second language to him.

The West Indian may even have trouble communicating with West Indians from other islands, for the different histories of the islands makes it no more likely that the Creole of one country will resemble that of another than that either will resemble standard English.

A lack of proficiency in standard English is the most noticeable educational problem West Indian children have when they emigrate. Some methods of coping with it will be discussed later.

At this point, however, it should be noted that a variety of misunderstandings are possible, caused by common words being used in different senses in Canada and the West Indies.

The extensive use of dialects is demonstrated by a study done in 1962 which found that in Jamaica, Creole was the native speech of 80 per cent of the population, the entire working class, skilled and agricultural workers, small shopkeepers and those higher up in the socio-economic scale who dealt with Creole speakers.

Cassidy considers Jamacian Creole to be a full language in which all matters, except some technical ones, can be expressed with considerable accuracy and "on the lips of many speakers, with aptness and even poetry."<sup>22</sup>

Jamacian Creole differs from standard English in several ways. In pronunciation, for example, the 'th' sound is replaced by 't' or 'd', so that "thin" and "then" become "tin" and "den". Creole has virtually no inflexions and nouns have only one form for singular, plural and possessive, while there is only one form of the verb for present and past. Further, pronouns are used in a severely reduced form. For example, "Im brok im fut" may mean he, she or it breaks or broke his, her or its foot or leg. Only the content tells which forms are intended. In questions, inversion is not used nor is the introductory "do" or "did". Vocabulary includes hundreds of non-standard words.<sup>22</sup>

The attitude of the populace to dialect is demonstrated by the reaction to a proposal by Dr. R. B. LePage made in 1955 that the first few years of school should be taught in Creole.

Cassidy reports that "this proposal was either not taken seriously or it was considered shocking. Newspaper columnists damned it as pernicious and insulting."

"In Jamaica, though most of the populace speak Creole, those higher up consider it utterly degraded and associate it with poverty and ignorance. The notion of giving it any degree of school sanction was intolerable; but it was also deeply insulting, as if 'good English' were a foreign language to Jamaicans.

"This unfavourable public reaction, plus what it would have cost to institute any such programs, killed the idea, at least for that time."

This ambivalent attitude of many West Indians to dialect has tremendous psychological repercussions and is closely tied in with feelings of inferiority.

Although all the West Indian islands have local dialects which are used by most of the people, these dialects are not considered good usage and are unacceptable, for the most part, in the upper strata. This led, in the past, to West Indian school teachers punishing their pupils for using dialect in the schoolyard, as well as in the classroom. Dialect was inadmissible in the churches and in the courts.

The rise of nationalism in the islands has created an even more ambivalent attitude towards dialect. Most West Indians still consider dialect an inferior form of English, but West Indian nationalists have lately taken to lauding it as a true expression of West Indian culture. It is too soon to decide whether the dialects will ever be accepted by the majority of West Indians as languages in their own right, as worthy of respect as Basque, or Catalan or Provencal.

Such acceptance would certainly reduce the psychological tension and deep-rooted feelings of inferiority now felt by West Indians struggling to express themselves in standard English.

In the immigrant family in Canada or Britain this ambivalence may cause intra-family friction.

In addition to the psychological problems, there is the much more obvious difficulty experienced by West Indian migrants, adults and children alike, trying to communicate with standard English speakers.

Blank incomprehension is the least of the difficulties. Far more friction is probably engendered by a mistaken belief that the two parties understand one another's meaning.

As Frank Collymore points out, the fact that the West Indian dialects and standard English use the same words to mean different things make it difficult for the West Indian to know when he is not speaking standard English. This is a problem that is not faced by a Spanish-speaking persons, for instance, or a Francophile, both of whom are aware when they are using their native languages and when they are speaking English.

Even a well-educated West Indian may be surprised to find that words he has used all his life do not exist in standard English, or if they do, have different meanings.

Consider three Barbadian words "gap", "scotch", and "tot." When a Barbadian goes to a dictionary he discovers a gap is not a driveway or entrance to a residence, that digging one's heels into the earth to secure a foothold is not scotching and that a tot is not a drinking vessel made of tin.

"These words have carried these meanings for him all his life; his confidence is shaken."<sup>1</sup>

Many words in use in the West Indies are survivals from 17th and 18th Century English. Some are obsolete. For example "cock-loft", "kill-cow" and token". \* Some are archaisms such as "nigh", "per-adventure" and "renege." A few words like "mould" (of a head) and "carfuffle" are still in use in some English dialects today.

Another source of West Indian words is the southern United States. For example the words "boar-cat" and "holler" are from the deep South.

In addition to these survivals and imports there are many words which have been coined locally, such as "merrywing" and "pompasett". (For the non-Barbadian, a merrywing is a sand-fly and to pompasett means to strut and dress ostentatiously.)

\* Translations: Cock-loft--a small bedroom in the upper storey of a house;  
Kill-cow--a bully or braggard;  
Token--an omen.

All the words discussed here are from the Barbadian dialect. When we recall that Barbados has always been a British possession and there are no complications resulting from the presence of a second European language, we begin to grasp the complexity of the dialects of Jamaica and Trinidad, where French and Spanish corruptions also are found.

However, as we mentioned earlier, the greatest possibility of confusion probably exists when a West Indian speaks to a speaker of standard English and both parties are misled by the familiar words into believing they understand one another.

Some of Collymore's examples will illustrate this:

When a Barbadian is giving you directions and tells you to go "across" he does not necessarily mean you should cross a bridge or pass by an intersecting road. Probably he simply means you should follow a certain road. Many directional words - above, below, up, etc. - have different meanings in Barbados - Canada.

Other differences are more subtle still. When a Barbadian says "Nough fish in the market today," he is implying a plethora of fish, rather than a sufficiency.<sup>1</sup>

It is these subtle differences of meaning in common words that are most difficult to detect and that can cause the most confusion.

Teachers dealing with West Indian immigrant children may easily conclude a child is insolent, disobedient or even perceptually handicapped when the real problem is that child and teacher alike assume, incorrectly, that they are speaking the same language.

### Religion

Religion in the West Indies, as in other parts of the world, is often linked to socio-economic status. Thus Anglicans in Jamaica and Barbados are often from the higher socio-economic classes, while the lower classes are likely to be Pentecostals, Adventists or Jehovah's Witnesses. It should be noted that these latter groups, considered sects in Canada, are major religious groups in the West Indies with a respected place in the social order. Baptists and Methodists also are found among middle and lower-middle classes.

Although there are many Hindus in Trinidad and Roman Catholics in those islands which were under French rule, it is the Protestant churches which concern us most.

One of the first things to note is that West Indian services in denominations are often characterized by more spirited chanting than the staid Canadian forms. One West Indian pointed out that the chanting and rhythmic devotions are more common than the organs which our more opulent churches can afford.

Whatever the reason, the West Indian who attended, say an Anglican church in the West Indies may feel out of place in the comparatively cold atmosphere of a Toronto Anglican church. As a result he will look for a denomination that better fits his devotional needs or stop going to church entirely. This disruption is yet another stress, and an entirely unexpected one for immigrants who expect their religious life, at least, will not be disturbed.

Another problem faces the adherent of one of the fundamentalist sects. While these sects are recognized and respected churches in the West Indies, the emigrant in Toronto may find his Adventist adherence makes him atypical by the standards of the Canadian middle class with which he identifies himself.

The solution is to seek out predominantly West Indian churches, with a resulting tendency to remain separate from Canadian social life. Alternatively the immigrant may change his denomination or abandon religion entirely. An important psychological prop has been removed and the net effect is added stress and trauma.

The question of reduced social status also arises. The immigrant may find his church occupies a lower position in the Canadian status hierarchy or he may deliberately choose a sect which enjoys little status in Canada because he feels more comfortable there than he does in the Canadian version of his own denomination. In either case the immigrant is assuming a lower niche in the socio-economic hierarchy, and, although he may be compensated by being in a compatible church, reduced status always creates strain and discontent. The traditional correlation of practices of worship with social class which has deep roots in the West Indies makes the immigrant even more sensitive to the different status of denominations than the native Canadian.

West African religious beliefs, like other facets of African culture, were discouraged by the slave-owners. The African religions went underground and surfaced later among the ex-slaves as a blend of African and Christian beliefs.

In religion, as in other areas, the gulf between upper and lower social classes is especially strong in Jamaica where the rural masses have evolved their own blend of African and Christian beliefs known locally as Pocomania. Services are distinguished by loud clapping and singing, accompanied by "spirit-possession."

By contrast the orthodox Christian churches such as the Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and Moravian attract a middle-class following. Worship is much more restrained though still more colourful than in Canadian services of those denominations. (In rural areas some people subscribe to both kinds of devotion.)

### Emigration

"Migration has always been the salvation of the West Indies. It has always been a case of stay an' burn or cut and run."<sup>9</sup>

Donald Hinds, who made the above statement, describes a Jamaican immigrant who went to England in 1955. In many ways the young man is typical of the thousands of West Indians who migrated in that decade.

He was 21 years old and had a minor school certificate. He could have been a junior teacher, but there were so few posts "if you didn't get into your own school, no way." Besides, the salaries were so low nobody could afford to live outside their native village on a junior teacher's wage. The young man tried to get into the Jamaican school of agriculture but there were only 25 vacancies and 2,000 applicants. With all other avenues closed he emigrated to Britain.<sup>9</sup>

West Indians have a long history of emigrating, first to the United States and Latin America, after the Second World War to Britain and, more recently, to Canada.

The generally accepted view is that emigration is encouraged by adverse economic conditions in the West Indies coupled with high population growth. Job opportunities are few and the competition is fierce. This is the "push" theory of emigration.

Field and Haikin<sup>6</sup> offer an alternative "pull" theory. They maintain these factors make some countries suitable pools from which immigrants can be drawn but do not, in themselves, cause emigration. In the past, say these authors, worse conditions have existed in the West Indies, but emigration has been low. The crucial factor is a demand for West Indian labour in other countries.

Similarly, Field and Haikin contend that high rates of population growth and high rates of emigration are not correlated. Trinidad and British Guiana (now Guyana), which have the highest rates of population growth, had the lowest emigration rates in the 1960's.

Most of us would probably reject both extreme positions and settle for a push-pull theory of emigration. The demand for labour in the host country is especially important where male emigrants are concerned.

Prior to the Second World War it was usual for West Indian men to work for several years in the labour-intensive agricultural economies and industries of the southern United States and the Latin American countries. Then, when the demand for labour in Britain boomed in the post-war years, coincidentally with restrictions on entry into the United States and other continental American countries, Britain became the magnet.

#### Immigration

The largest wave of West Indian immigrants entered Britain at this period. The labour shortage in post-war Britain led to West Indian immigration being encouraged to ensure a supply of workers for industry. In addition many West Indians who served in the British forces during the war remained in the country afterwards and brought out their dependents from the West Indies.

Post-war Britain was far from reluctant to accept these immigrants. On the contrary, there was active recruitment of West Indians through advertising campaigns in the Caribbean countries. Owing to the chronic shortage of job opportunities in the West Indies there was an overwhelming response. In 1951, for example, an estimated 1,750 West Indians entered the United Kingdom; in 1952 and 1953 about 3,000 West Indians emigrated annually, and by 1954 the immigration rate had risen to 11,000.

Many of these migrants, such as nurses and labourers for London Transport, had pre-arranged jobs waiting for them in the United Kingdom. London Transport maintained an information and recruiting centre in Barbados. Other migrants found jobs after arriving in Britain. In most cases the migrants filled positions that were not wanted by the native Britons.

From the beginning a very high proportion of the immigrants were women.<sup>6</sup>

West Indian immigration into Britain was drastically reduced by the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, which imposed quotas. Although detailed records were not kept of West Indian immigration immediately prior to 1962, it is known that in that year, despite the quotas, 7,000 West Indians were added to the immigrant population in Britain. Certainly the annual figures in the years immediately preceding the act, when many immigrants raced to beat the ban, were much higher.

There is a definite difference in type between the pre- and post Second World War migrations. Whereas the labourers who went to continental America tended to think of themselves as transients rather than emigrants and usually returned to the West Indies, the migrants to Britain showed a much greater tendency to settle. Similarly contemporary West Indian immigrants to Canada appear to fall into the category of settlers, rather than visitors.

Of course this does not mean that many West Indian emigrants do not return to their homelands or that many do not speak of returning. Most emigrants carry a little nostalgia in their baggage and it is not unusual for an immigrant of several years standing to consider his new home a temporary one. Often, however, a short visit to the homeland is all that results.

Canada is a fairly recent destination as far as West Indian emigrants are concerned. So far there has been nothing like the mass exodus to this country that Britain saw in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

However, an examination of the immigration figures (See the appendix) show that Canada is becoming increasingly popular. In addition, dependents of the early immigrants are arriving in increasing numbers. There is little doubt that short of a disastrous economic slump or the imposition of prohibitively strict quotas more and more West Indian immigrants will be drawn to this country. And Toronto, as an affluent English-speaking metropolis, will attract most of them.

## III

THE IMMIGRANT

Although they carry their native culture with them immigrants are seldom representative of the countries they come from. Numerically the immigrant is part of a minority group and his minority status may begin long before he leaves home. To the stay-at-homes his dreams of adventure, travel and wealth are only dreams. When they finally materialize and become actuality the immigrant becomes a member of a minority group in earnest - not a visionary minority but an actual national minority in an alien country.

What forces drive a man to uproot himself from his homeland and re-establish himself on foreign soil? Lack of opportunity at home and the promise of a better chance in a new land are not, in themselves, sufficient explanation. For every emigrant there are hundreds who are as well aware of the economic argument yet prefer to stay at home. The answer must lie in particular circumstances and individual differences of temperament.

When people emigrate from a poorer country to a richer one economic factors undoubtedly play a role. We may hypothesize that the emigrant has a greater share of ambition than his countrymen who stay at home. When the host country applies restrictions, as Canada does, the immigrant becomes even less representative for he must have skills and an educational level superior to most of his countrymen.

The West Indian immigrant to Canada, then, is likely to be an ambitious man, probably without sufficient prospects or attainments in his own country to keep him there, but with above-average skills, education and ambition.

Expectations

Even if he is mainly motivated by a spirit of adventure the immigrant does not usually anticipate that his lot will worsen. On the contrary, he expects to improve his status. In the particular case of West Indians coming to Canada we may safely assume that, because of the selection

process, they were sufficiently far up the socio-economic scale in their homelands to feel that anything less than middle-class status in Canada would be failing.

#### The Actuality - The Reception by the Natives

The actuality is often bitterly disillusioning. The immigrant finds his skills are not recognized, the slender resources he brought with him are barely sufficient to maintain him, much less give him time and opportunity to establish himself, and the natives are indifferent or even actively resentful.

The immigrant is traditionally expected to start at the bottom of the heap. If he is lucky, able and seizes what opportunities come his way, he may regain a status comparable to that he enjoyed in his homeland. If he is extremely lucky, exceptionally able and particularly ambitious he may, eventually, achieve the status he dreamed about when he left his own country.

#### Status Reduction

Invariably, however, the early experience is one of status reduction, and that is particularly hard to bear because the immigrant is likely to be more than usually motivated to improve his lot.

The West Indian in particular often finds his qualifications are not recognized in Canada; he is told he lacks Canadian experience and is forced to take a menial job to survive. The contrast with his early expectations is shattering and embittering.

Immigrants, whatever their colour or nationality, have a tendency to arrive in the host country with limited financial resources. Some arrive poor and stay poor for several generations and those who do eventually achieve a socio-economic niche equal or superior to the one they enjoyed at home are confronted by sharp dislocations produced by their upward vertical mobility.

The effect is most pronounced with immigrants who are semi-skilled and come from poor nations such as the West Indian countries. It is difficult enough for these people to save the price of their fare and make provision for dependents they leave behind, without accumulating

a reserve of money to see them through their early days in the host country. The newly-arrived immigrant therefore has no choice but to seek out friends or relatives who have come before him and are, for the reasons outlined, probably living in the poorer areas of the city.

This leads initially to a grouping of immigrants in particular locales and has been reported in British, United States and Canadian studies.<sup>13</sup> The arrangement does have a great deal to recommend it. The presence of his fellow countrymen helps to soften the cultural shock experienced by the new immigrant and his more experienced compatriots may offer useful advice, as well as financial support.

The other side of the coin, however, is these communities tend to isolate themselves from the natives of the host country and probably delay the acculturation of the new immigrant. Myths and misapprehensions grow easily and may distort the immigrant's view of the host country and mislead him. And, of course, it sometimes happens that better-acclimated immigrants batten on the inexperience of the new arrivals and their willingness to trust a fellow-countryman.

After these early problems have been overcome and the immigrant finds a better-paying job, more suited to his skills than the menial tasks he has foisted on him on arrival, he is likely to seek accommodation better suited to his status. If the early phase has continued for any length of time his family may have meanwhile put down roots in the ethnic community and their upward mobility will be accompanied by painful separations from friends and less-successful relatives.

Thus the see-saw of status-reduction and status-acquisition produces tensions whichever way the immigrant moves.

Added to the tensions engendered by status-reduction are the stresses of culture shock and, in the case of many West Indian immigrants, the strain of having to compete for the first time with whites.

#### Family Stresses - Including Working Women

Because of the host of uncertainties surrounding the new venture and the expense of bringing out his family, the male immigrant often leaves his wife and children at home. Similarly, unmarried mothers leave their children with a relative, usually the maternal grandmother, against the time they are sufficiently well-established to send for them.

These family dislocations may last for years and are a major cause of stress, both to the parents and to the children. The custom is so prevalent among West Indian immigrants it is very nearly universal.

In 1961, for example, British statistics showed 98 per cent of the children of Jamaican immigrants were left behind. Many of these children later joined their parents, but only after several years.

The effect on the children cannot be overestimated. They are exposed to not one, but a series of emotional upheavals. First there is the separation from the parents and relocation with relatives, then, after that adjustment has been painfully made, there is a second parting from a solicitous relative and a solitary journey to a strange country. To compound the dislocation, the children are often met by parents they scarcely remember, sometimes greeted by new brothers and sisters born in the host country, and then cooped up in small apartments in an inclement climate, which contrasts harshly with the active, open-air lives they enjoyed in the West Indies.<sup>5</sup>

As a final blow, children who were accustomed to the ministrations of constantly-available grandmothers, backed up by friends and an extended family, often find their mothers are working long hours in the new country and the neighbours are chilly and reserved.

Apart from the brand-new family arrangements the immigrant child rejoining his parents must face, there is a severe cultural shock. The child usually knows very little about the country he is going too. If adult immigrants are ill-prepared, now much more confusing and upsetting are the customs of the host country to a child?

In addition, the child may feel a strong resentment towards his parents for leaving him behind originally and, later, for tearing him away from the grandmother who has become a surrogate parent. As Field and Haikin point out, the child may regard being left behind and then being sent for as a double punishment.<sup>6</sup>

From the point of view of the parent this hostility is inexplicable and ungrateful. A major reason for emigrating is to provide better opportunities for one's offspring. Raising money for the child's fare from the West Indies involves sacrifices. When instead of a happy family reunion the parents are confronted by a sullen and reticent child they react with anger.

A vicious circle is in the making, leading to mounting family strife. This strife may be accentuated by the necessity for the mother to work. To a West Indian man, having his wife working can easily be interpreted as a sign of his failure to be an adequate provider. However, the difficulty the immigrant typically finds in obtaining a well-paying position makes it essential for the wife to work. Both employers and fellow employees may make it difficult for the immigrant to find work and to keep it.

West Indian immigrants with skills often run into problems because their qualifications are not easily assessed by Canadian employers. In addition, there often are differences in equipment, machinery and terminology.

Further, there is no doubt that in some cases rejection by employers or fellow employees is based simply on colour prejudice.

Wallace Collins, a Jamaican, recounts how he lost a job in Britain when white fellow employees resented his success:

"The lessons I learned in that job were, it doesn't pay to be too interested in the white man's work, lest you be accused of being geared to do him out of his job; and it is wise to make yourself as inconspicuous as possible. In order to work in that shop, or get ahead with the men, I would have had to arrest my individualism, work within the confines of the myth they perpetuated about West Indians, and become a black senseless robot, and illiterate migrant from the land of banana and sugar cane, from an isle a former British prime minister described as 'the British Empire's slum'."<sup>28</sup>

Collins' reaction expresses much of the bitterness the immigrant may feel - an anger that may be turned outwards against the community or his family or inwards, against himself.

#### Education

When the immigrant child enters school in the host country for the first time a whole new area of potential conflict within the family and between the family and the native community is opened up.

In the West Indies education traditionally has been seen as the golden road to economic and social advancement. In contrast to the paucity of educational facilities in the West Indies the schools in Canada appear to offer an overwhelming opportunity to the migrant. Parents of immigrant children, whose own education was limited by the inadequate opportunities in their Caribbean homelands, may hold extravagantly high hopes for the children's success in Canadian schools.

However, the immigrant child does not face an easy task. He is confronted with a confusing medley of new stimuli ranging from the unfamiliar timbre and accent of his teacher's voice to the baffling array of new tools and equipment. Perhaps for the first time there is an abundance of such elementary tools as paper, pencils, crayons and books, not to mention such things as audio-visual aids. Most of these things are less abundant in the West Indies, and some materials including many textbooks must be supplied by the pupil.

The same abundance of educational facilities that the parents expect will lead to an almost automatic learning process represents as much of a threat as a help to the child. Movies, slides and overhead projectors, which Canadian children are taught to operate in the primary grades, may completely over-awe a child from a rural West Indian school and distract him from the message which is being imparted. A child who has only seen a map printed on the pages of a book may take some time to grasp that the map projected on a screen eight-feet high represents the same geographical area. Secondary students who have come from schools with inadequate laboratory facilities may be accustomed to scientific lecture - demonstrations, but quite unschooled in the manipulation of equipment required to perform an experiment.

Lacking personal experience in the host country's school system, the parents often fail to appreciate the problems which the child is facing and to understand the handicaps which he must surmount. Few immigrant parents are in a position to offer pertinent advice.

#### The Immigrant Child - Caught in the Middle

The primary feeling of the immigrant child newly arrived in the host country is probably one of isolation. The child has been removed from his friends and from the maternal grandmother who looked after

him for years while both parents worked to establish a foothold in the host country; the friendly, accepting West Indian community and extended family he is accustomed to, has been replaced by cold, uncaring, white strangers and, worst of all, his parents have become near-strangers after years of separation.

The isolation is exacerbated by large classes in schools. British teachers found immigrant children responded far better in small tutorial groups.<sup>6</sup>

School teachers too, may seem to him cold and remote compared to his teachers back home, who may have been more likely to encourage an emotional attachment between their pupils and themselves.

In addition to the other handicaps he must cope with the immigrant child faces new distractions out of school, notably easy access to television which he probably did not have in the West Indies.

Boys and girls have different problems in the field of family chores too. On the one hand, the chores performed by boys from a rural setting, such as bringing water, are no longer called for and the boys have more time on their hands. However, they also may feel less valuable and of less use to the family.

For the girls the situation is reversed. The house-keeping and baby-sitting chores which were their duties at home not only still exist but are likely to be even more onerous because the mother is working.

All these factors militate against the immigrant child succeeding in school. The parents find their children's failure inexplicable and ascribe it to laziness, heightening the family tensions.

Another cause of inter-family strife is more commonly associated with southern European immigrants, but may also be found among other migrants. This is a disparity between methods of child-raising in the mother and the host countries.

Typically this cultural disparity centres on the amount of freedom the child should enjoy. If the culture of the mother country dictates high parental control, the child may fight for the same amount of autonomy as his Canadian peers. This is the classic situation caused by cultural differences in an immigrant situation, and almost any disparity between methods of child-raising in mother and host countries is a potential source of friction between parent and child.

#### IV THE NATIVES

The most important factor making for the easy acceptance of an immigrant in a host country is the degree of similarity between the immigrant and the native. Basically this means both the native and the immigrant must recognize similar qualities in each other. Differences in culture and differences in appearance make the process of assimilation and acculturation more difficult for both parties.

So far we have discussed culture shock as though it were restricted to the newcomer. But the native, too, may experience culture shock when he comes into contact with immigrants with different attitudes and habits. Again the comforting notion that accepted cultural things are universal, inevitable and "right" is threatened. However, because of his majority position it is more easy for the native to write off differences as aberrations and go on his way with his own framework intact.

This becomes increasingly difficult as the proportion of foreigners in a society increases. In addition, a sizeable population of immigrants may easily be seen as a threat when jobs are scarce in times of economic slowdowns. Other things being equal, the most favourable conditions for the easy acceptance of immigrants by the natives are a small proportion of immigrants and a strong economy where competition for work is not intense.

When the immigrant is coloured there is a well-popularized label which may be applied to any form of rejection - race discrimination. As the vast majority of West Indian immigrants to Canada are coloured there is an ever-present danger of charges of race discrimination being levelled and the Ontario Human Rights Commission has dealt with several such complaints.

### Their General Reaction

There is no question that Canada, like other countries, has its share of racists nor is there any question that some racial discrimination is practised. The immigrant is usually most aware of discrimination in the fields of employment and housing. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say how prevalent racial discrimination is in Canada, particularly as it is virtually impossible to differentiate between discrimination based on race and differential treatment based on other factors.

One of the few studies in the field was conducted by Dutton<sup>20</sup> who found evidence that Canadians sometimes bend over backwards to avoid giving the impression of being prejudiced. Dutton had black and white couples enter 40 restaurants in Toronto and Vancouver which enforce dress regulations forbidding the admission of men without ties. A black and a white couple visited the restaurants on the same night. In half the cases the black couple entered first and in the other half the order was reversed. A record was kept of how many restaurateurs refused admission to the tieless men, and the circumstances.

Dutton found that when the black couple entered the restaurant first they were served 75 per cent of the time, compared to a 30 per cent acceptance rate for the whites who entered first.

However, once a tieless man had been served most restaurateurs apparently felt a precedent had been set and admitted the second couple. Similarly if the first couple was turned away the second couple also was likely to be rejected.

It is the preferential treatment given the black couples that appears to be most significant. Apparently Canadians are quite sensitive to issues of race and will go to some lengths to avoid getting into a position where they may be accused of racial prejudice.

Such studies do not provide much information about general attitudes of Canadians to coloured persons. However a demonstrated awareness of a man's colour, even if it results in preferential treatment, will cause him to feel isolated and different.

### Employers and Fellow Employees

When he seeks employment the immigrant may find himself up against serious problems caused by the attitudes of prospective employers and the attitudes of his fellow workers. Undoubtedly some of the problems are caused by straight-forward xenophobia when the immigrant is coloured or from an obviously different ethnic group. Such prejudice has been documented in all countries, including Canada, and it is doubtful if there is any short-range method of eradicating it. It is not always easy to differentiate blatant prejudice from cultural conflict, however, and the two phenomena usually reinforce each other.

As far as employers are concerned, West Indians in Britain frequently have complained that those responsible for hiring are not willing to hire them in positions where they will meet the public on the grounds that "the public (or customers) are not as free from prejudice as I am." (This particular expression of prejudice may be relatively uncommon in Canada.)

Another argument used by employers who bother to justify their refusal to hire coloured immigrants is that other employees will object.

There is some basis of fact for this allegation, at least in Britain. Apart from outright prejudice, which is undoubtedly as rife among employees as employers, the immigrant is often seen as a threat to positions of strength built up by trade unions and other worker organizations. Trade union men in Britain in the 1950's and 1960's frequently complained that the West Indian immigrants to that country were a threat to the union movement. West Indians showed little interest in trade unionism, seldom playing an active role and sometimes working as strike-breakers.

Another pitfall for the immigrant seeking work is a reluctance by employers to recognize his qualifications. Even if his vocational or educational qualifications are impeccable he may be told he lacks "Canadian experience". If he is hired the immigrant usually has to accept a lower salary, his lack of local experience being cited as justification. Both employer and employee are aware that the financial resources of the new arrival are too slim to permit the immigrant to bargain.

These problems are not peculiar to the coloured immigrant. However, if the immigrant is coloured, the label of "racial discrimination" is readily at hand and quite likely to be invoked. It becomes virtually impossible to differentiate between real cases of racial discrimination and the universal practice of taking advantage of the immigrant.

R. B. Davison in his book *Commonwealth Immigrants* points out that many West Indians in Britain found themselves trapped in a vicious circle when they went job hunting.

The attitude of management was: First join the union, then we can give you a job, while the union insisted the immigrant should first have a job before joining.<sup>4</sup>

The native Britons felt most strongly about the impact of West Indian migrants on health services, usage, housing and jobs. It was widely felt that immigrants were straining resources in all these areas. Whether these accusations were well-founded or not they played a major part in inciting the race riots that struck Britain in 1958.<sup>4</sup>

So far Canada has largely been spared race riots. However some of the same complaints about immigrants are being voiced in this country that were voiced in Britain.

In the past year some Canadian unions on strike against their employers have complained that immigrant workers have signed on as scab labour.

There are two obvious reasons for this: First, the immigrant often finds his best opportunity at a plant or business boycotted by native employees; second, the tradition of trade union solidarity is much less well-established in the West Indies than in countries which have a longer history of industrialization.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of worker solidarity, then, like the housing issue, arises mainly from cultural differences between immigrants and native Canadians. When racial differences also enter the picture the high visibility of the immigrants makes them easy targets for landlords, employers and employees practising discrimination.

## V

THE IMMIGRANT CHILD AND THE SCHOOL

Soon after his arrival in Canada the West Indian child is enrolled in a local school. A new school is a stressful experience even for the native child. It requires little imagination to see how stressful an experience it may be for an immigrant child already battered by culture shock, uprooted from his familiar environment and friends and, possibly, living with parents who have become strangers after years of separation.

It is in this highly emotional and disoriented state that the child's ability and achievement level will be assessed by Canadian teachers who, for the most part, are unfamiliar with his culture, his personal history and the educational system in which he has been trained.

The usual criteria used in deciding what grade an immigrant child should enter are age, the grade the child was in in his previous school, and the child's performance on various aptitude, intelligence and academic tests.

Educational Level

Canadian educators certainly are not oblivious to these difficulties. However it is by no means certain that they fully appreciate the magnitude of the adjustment problem facing the West Indian child or any other immigrant child.

The problem is that the child must be fitted into our educational system at some level, and some decision must be made at the outset.

The first and most general guide, as we mentioned, is age. The unsatisfactory nature of age as a guide to academic achievement is well recognized, but in the absence of other criteria it must play an important part in deciding which grade the immigrant child should enter.

Using age as a criterion does have the advantage of placing the child with native Canadians approximately at his own level of maturity. Hopefully this will encourage interaction and socialization of the immigrant child in Canadian ways. It also prevents the erosion of self-confidence that can occur if the West Indian child is placed in a class with much younger children and is less intimidating than placing the immigrant child among older Canadian schoolmates.

A simple correlation of equivalent grades between West Indian and Canadian schools cannot be achieved for many reasons. The major problem is that subject matter and level of complexity may differ from one West Indian country to the next, and even within a single country there may be a considerable disparity between the subjects taught at the same grade level in rural and urban, private and public schools, although nominally they all have the same syllabus.

A partial solution would be access to West Indian syllabuses and course descriptions in those countries from which most immigrants come - Trinidad-Tobago, Jamaica,\* Barbados and Guyana. Used with discretion such syllabuses could be a major aid.

A general knowledge of the organization of West Indian schools may also help.

In this respect the Jamaican school system is typical of the West Indies. The child attends a primary school until he is about 12. On the basis of an "eleven plus" type of examination, students can either go to a high school, which has a relatively strong academic program, or (if their exam mark is lower) to a junior secondary, a comprehensive school which is designed for academically weaker students. However, if his parents can afford a private high school a student can bypass the eleven plus hurdle.

A high school student who has passed the 'O' level examination in a subject is at a Grade 12 level or higher. 'A' level courses are usually considered the equivalent of Grade 13 but are really as difficult as first year university. As high school qualifications, for other than university attendance which requires three 'A' level passes, two to four 'O' level passes are adequate.

Many West Indian parents and educators feel underevaluation of achievement is more common than the opposite when an immigrant child enters the Canadian school system. They suggest that instead of placing the child in a lower grade initially it might be better to place him in a higher grade than he was in in the West Indies to see how well he performs.

\* But Jamaican school syllabuses are currently in process of revision, and consequently unavailable; inquiries to other territories are pending.

This suggestion would probably help to alleviate family tensions and may instil self-confidence in the child, but the pitfalls are obvious and its practicality needs to be assessed in individual, concrete situations.

#### Academic Evaluation

As age and equivalent-grade methods of assessing the immigrant child's entry point into the Canadian school system appear to have serious drawbacks, there seems no alternative but to rely on tests of academic proficiency and psychological aptitude and intelligence tests. If such tests are cautiously interpreted and if a long-term program of reassessment is established with periodic retesting this is probably the most practical method of deciding on the entry point.

However, it cannot be stressed too strongly that the key words are cautious interpretation of results, for several factors can confound testing procedures.

The first, and possibly most important one is the emotional state of the child. It has been pointed out that the immigrant child entering the Canadian school system is likely to be in a highly-disturbed emotional state. At the best this will amount to little more than extreme nervousness, but quite serious emotional disturbances are also to be expected.

The effect of such disturbances on test results is illustrated by a study carried out in England by Graham and Meadows in 1967,<sup>27</sup> who found West Indian children who had been separated from their parents when the parents emigrated showed strong symptoms of emotional upset and disorientation. (Similarly, it was found that the I. Q. of West Indian children in Britain was related to age at arrival in England.<sup>30</sup>)

The children in Graham and Meadows' study had difficulty in reading and made exceptionally low scores on intelligence tests. The evidence indicated that their learning difficulties and their poor test results stemmed from their emotional difficulties. As it is common practice for children to be sent for only after West Indian parents have established themselves in the host country this problem is likely to be encountered frequently.

Other experimenters have found that West Indian children's performance on I.Q. tests is negatively affected by a white administrator.<sup>30</sup>

It may be argued that tests of academic proficiency, even if their outcome is coloured by the child's emotional problems, do indicate how well the child will cope in class and it is a disservice to the child, the teacher and his classmates to put him in a class working at a much higher level than he can handle.

There is a good deal of merit in this argument. The drawback, however, is that demoting a child in terms of grade-equivalence may erode his self-confidence still further and increase his emotional problems.

Further, such demotion may lead to major problems at home if the parents fail to understand the reasons.

The problem is exacerbated because West Indians tend to consider that British education is the finest in the world and that their system, because it is modelled on the British one, shares its merits. The new arrival tends to think of Canadian education as inferior and therefore finds it inexplicable that his child should be put back.

These feelings are not necessarily expressed. There is a long-established tradition in the West Indies that one does not argue with persons in positions of authority (who are very often white). Further, white teachers are a rarity in the islands, and the novelty of dealing with a white teacher inhibits the parent.

Often the only solution is to put the child in a lower grade than the one he was in in the West Indies. If this is done, however, every effort must be made to explain to the parents why the step has been taken, and the child should be periodically reassessed to see if he can be promoted to his original level.

In many cases switching the child among grades is made difficult by the structure of the school system. Ungraded schools obviously have a tremendous advantage in this respect over the traditional lock-step system.

The emotional problems that cause a child to perform poorly in tests of his academic proficiency also handicap him in intelligence and aptitude tests. An equally important factor is the cultural barrier. An example may illustrate this.

#### Cultural Bias in Tests

Which word is most out of place here?

- (a) splib (b) blood (c) grey (d) spook (e) black.

Could you answer that question? Probably not unless you happened to grow up in a Black ghetto in the United States.

On the other hand, if you were asked which word is out of place in the following list:

(a) piano (b) violin (c) flute (d) tape-recorder  
you would have little trouble.

The first question comes from an intelligence test designed by Black sociologist Adrian Dove. It underlines the point that a Black child may do extremely badly on an intelligence test simply because he is unfamiliar with the content.<sup>13</sup> The second question is typical of intelligence tests designed by middle-class psychologists for middle-class children.

Within their limitations both sets of questions are adequate instruments for comparing intelligence among children of the same background. The difficulty faced by a minority group or by an immigrant child from an alien culture, is that they cannot fairly be judged by tests designed for the majority group or host culture. In the past, however, such tests have been applied freely and often far-reaching decisions about the child's potential have been made on such bases.

It has been verified repeatedly that even the most cleverly-devised "culture-free" intelligence tests are, in fact, dependent on culture. It is extremely difficult to compose a test that does not involve the concepts typical of a culture, ways of thought and methods of manipulating ideas. The naive administrations of tests of children from other cultures will therefore inevitably show them in an unfavourable light. It is interesting, however, that when the experimenters controlled for prolonged parental absence, crowded conditions at home, time of arrival in England, age, sex, and father's occupational class, as well as race of tester, that West Indian children in England surpassed English children (though not by a statistically significant margin) on an individually administered verbal test of intelligence (the Stanford-Binet Form L-M).<sup>30</sup>

However, since all of the West Indian children tested had come to England before their fifth birthday, it is debatable how "West Indian" as opposed to "British" their cultural background was. At the least it was very mixed.

The final confounding factor that should make the Canadian educator wary of test results is the often unappreciated communications barrier existing between immigrant child and teacher or tester. The language issue is so important it deserves a section to itself.

Footnote: A comprehensive survey of the literature concerning "culture-free" intelligence tests and methods of teaching standard English to dialect-speakers is provided by Norman R. McLeod.<sup>13</sup>

## VI

LANGUAGE AND WEST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA

"West Indian children are suffering from difficulties of hearing, in the sense that their frameworks of reference for the accents which reach their ears is one of perception according to Creole and not according to English. They are suffering from difficulties of understanding, because even if they hear the words correctly those words and the grammatical construction in which they are used has slightly or even grossly different meanings for them. They are suffering from difficulties of expression, since teachers do not easily understand their mode of speech in which the children are uninhibited, that is the Creole dialect, and, if they are attempting to use the teacher's dialect, there is a certain degree of inhibition which would tend to make them dry up and keep silent. They suffer these disabilities within a psychological situation which makes it important for them to insist that they already speak good English." (R. B. LePage).<sup>24</sup>

Of all the incorrect assumptions we are likely to make about West Indian children the most damaging one is, perhaps, underestimating the language barrier. It is especially easy to do this because the official language of the West Indies is English, because West Indian children usually understand more standard English than they speak, and because West Indians often cannot admit to being deficient in standard English for fear of losing status.

Dialect and Standard English

It is not clear whether the dialect-speaking West Indian is assisted by the similarity of his patois to standard English. Certainly he finds it far easier to understand standard English than, say, a French-speaking child, but here similarities between dialect and standard English may also make for a negative transfer of learning, seriously handicapping him in his attempts to speak standard English. Very often the West Indian does not know when he is not speaking standard English.

Whether command of a dialect of English is or is not an advantage in learning standard English, the dialect speaker from the West Indies definitely is handicapped in two distinct ways when he tries to cope with a standard English-speaking society.

The first hurdle he must surmount is the social stigma attached to speaking "incorrect" English. A generalizing effect operates against those who use unusual grammatical forms or novel words. He is likely to be seen as uneducated and lacking in ability in many areas apart from language skills.

The second problem is less obvious. Insofar as languages are functional in the societies in which they develop they are well-suited to expressing the concepts of those societies. However, they may be grossly inadequate as instruments with which to perceive dissimilar societies. There appears to be an important link between language, performance in non-verbal areas, thinking and conceptualizing.

The precise nature of the links is a fruitful source of disagreement among linguists and psychologists. However, all agree that language, thought and performance are closely related. Language is not only the method by which ideas are expressed and communicated, it also is the tool by which concepts are grasped and manipulated. A deficiency in language, then, is much more serious than just a deficiency in communication.

McLeod<sup>13</sup> cites a study of the dialect spoken by the hard-core poor in the United States. Not only were the vocabulary and syntax distinct from that used by the middle class, but the very mode of perception appeared different. McLeod postulates the altered perception and language were a means of adjusting to the reality of poverty.

For example, the dialect of the hard-core poor contained little reference to time, which was perceived moment by moment and incident by incident and not "as a series of events which lead to one another and on to the future." This way of looking at time may be a useful tool in surviving in a world where long-term plans are impracticable and where to live day-by-day is the norm.

A study conducted in London in 1968 found that West Indian children were less successful than immigrant children from non-English-speaking countries, despite the advantage one would expect their command of a dialect of English to give them.

McLeod says the implication "is that a child whose language and culture are the language and culture of poverty or a pre-industrial society - even if his language is actually a dialect of English - is at a far greater disadvantage in the Canadian school system than the child whose parents are skilled, middle-class immigrants raised in a large city."<sup>13</sup>

Linguists studying non-formal languages, such as the dialects of the West Indies, have noted dialect speakers characteristically:

- Use short sentences which frequently are not finished;
- Use sentences of poor syntactical form;
- Use conjunctions simply and repetitively and make limited use of subordinate clauses;
- Are unable to hold a formal subject through a speech sequence, which makes for a dislocated information content;
- Make a rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs;
- Make infrequent use of personal pronouns as subjects of conditional clauses or sentences;
- Confound a reason and a conclusion;
- Indulge in sympathetic circularity, which involves frequently referring back to an earlier speech sequence through such phrases as "you see" and "wouldn't it".<sup>2</sup>

The Creole languages express the possessive relationship, the number distinction in nouns and verbs, the past tense in verbs, and the cases of pronouns by different means than the Indo-European languages, in which such relationships are indicated by suffixes of some kind. Grammatical relations in the Creoles are largely expressed by juxtaposition of words, by the aid of special function words, or by the stress and pitch patterns. The words themselves are for the most part invariable.

If a speaker of standard English were guilty of these speech habits he would be considered to be using "incorrect" English.

This is the most dangerous pitfall that awaits teachers: assuming that the dialect-speaking child is speaking incorrect English, and conceiving of their task as "correcting his mistakes." The West Indian child speaking Creole is, of course, no more speaking incorrect English than the Spanish-speaking child conversing in Spanish.

Teachers who miss this point are beginning with several strikes against them. They risk poisoning their relationship with the child and undermining his self-esteem by constant "corrections"; and they are likely to overlook the systematic nature of the differences between the child's dialect and standard English which are the key to constructing a teaching program.

One way of establishing early rapport with dialect-speaking children may be for teachers to begin with a discussion of the function of language as a means of communicating the ideas important to a society. Where there are different regions within a nation which have different patterns of life, dialects develop. It is usually an accident of history that determines which dialect becomes the accepted or standard language of a country; and over time different regional speeches may predominate. In Canada standard English is the predominant language, and successful communication requires that standard English be mastered.

The next step should involve setting up an individual learning program for the child. Here a contrastive analysis targeting major differences in pronunciation, grammar and the use of important verbs such as the verb "to be" is a valuable aid. If the teacher is already familiar with the child's dialect or can seek help from a West Indian linguist this task will be tremendously simplified. Failing this, the alternative is to make an initial study of the child's language patterns, separating systematic discrepancies from standard English from isolated instances. It will be easier for the child to learn standard English if both he and his teacher are conscious of explicit differences between his dialect and the standard tongue.

A great deal of practice is necessary before the new patterns of speech become as automatic for the West Indian child as the patterns of his dialect. Question-and-answer sessions, with the teacher shaping the questions to evoke the targeted patterns repeatedly, are a useful drill.

Teachers who become familiar with West Indian dialects will find several usages that simply cannot be translated into standard English. Similarly there will be constructions in standard English that do not exist in some dialects. Because of the variety of West Indian dialects, these cannot be pinpointed in advance; but if the child appears to be having special difficulty with some constructions, especially forms of the verb "to be", this type of non-parallelism may be the cause.

Many of the points raised here are strikingly reminiscent of the problems and methods found in teaching second languages.

This raises a question. Should dialect be considered a second language or should it be considered non-standard English? And, when we teach the immigrant child standard English, should we use the methods we employ when teaching a second language or should we use the methods we use to instruct English-speaking children?

Dennis Craig, a lecturer at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica who participated in several experiments, believes neither approach is entirely appropriate.<sup>2</sup> The dialect-speaking child has too much vocabulary in common with standard English to be taught the standard version of the tongue as a second language. On the other hand his patterns of speech are too foreign to use the orthodox methods employed in teaching English-speaking children.

Craig reports that students at the English GCE level have a failure rate of between 70 and 80 per cent in Jamaica and, when we consider that admission to higher education is only possible for the most gifted children and those from the highest socio-economic strata, it becomes obvious that standard English is acquired by a child only with difficulty. The dialect-child can understand far more Standard English than he can reproduce. This difference in the levels of understanding and reproduction can confuse both the child and the teacher. Both parties may jump to wrong conclusions about the child's proficiency in the language.

The system developed by Craig and his associates takes this into consideration. The teacher uses standard English at all times to dialect-speaking pupils, except when an excursion into the vernacular is necessary to make a point. In this way the child is consistently exposed to a model of the language being taught.

At the same time teachers must be extremely careful not to derogate the dialect and/or discourage children from asking questions in the vernacular or using it in peer-interaction.

That the University of the West Indies saw fit to spend so much time on the problem, shows that it is not only the immigrant child from the West Indies who is handicapped by his lack of fluency in standard English. The emigrants are, in fact, but a small proportion of all the children affected.

The methods developed by Craig and his associates are of limited use in Canada. For one thing there are few Canadian teachers who speak a West Indian dialect.

On the other hand, the West Indian work underlines the fact that the dialect-speaking child does not fall into either of the recognized categories of English-speaker or non-English speaker. An individual approach is necessary that takes full advantage of the child's ability to understand standard English and does not underestimate the handicap of negative transfer.

Craig's basic methodology also may usefully be applied. It is essential first to analyse the child's speech patterns individually, and pinpoint the areas which need the most attention. Tape recordings are useful here.

Second, it is better to encourage the child to express himself freely, even if incorrectly, than to limit expression to a trickle of "correct" English. Language can best be shaped once the child is producing language prolifically.

Probably this is especially important in the Canadian context. The emigrant West Indian child's peer contacts will be almost exclusively in standard English, unlike the peer contacts of the stay-at-home. Many basic standard English patterns can be learned from peers if the dialect-speaking child is confident enough to interact.

A corollary to this point is that the language lessons should be of intrinsic interest to the child. The aim is to instil enough interest and confidence in the child to encourage him to communicate. The communication can then be shaped and guided to ensure maximum practice in those areas of standard English most necessary.

Perhaps the formal classroom training should be seen as an enrichment program designed to introduce concepts, vocabulary and sophisticated patterns of speech that the child is unlikely to acquire from his peers.

While a formal analysis of the dialect speaker's deficiencies and a concentration on those areas which differ most from standard English is essential, we suggest the most important remedial training will involve building up the child's confidence and encouraging him to express himself. Because total fluency in a language, as distinct from technical or academic proficiency, is best acquired in informal situations, remedial programs should not remove the immigrant child from contact with his Canadian peers.

Crash programs in Canadian culture and language, especially those which involve spending many hours in classes separate from the natives, are better suited to the adult or the mature child who is coping successfully with the cultural shock of his alien environment. It is doubtful that they are suited to the needs of the younger immigrant child.

The dialect-speaking child learning standard English faces another problem that the Francophile learning English, for example, does not face. Because of the prevalent attitude that dialects are incorrect or inferior forms of English, the dialect-speaking parent may be ambivalent about his child's accomplishments.

On the one hand the parent may be pleased to see that the child is mastering standard English, but at the same time he may feel threatened. As the child gains proficiency and learns to speak "correctly" it underlines the parent's felt inadequacies. The parent may become resentful and insecure and perhaps unconsciously, discourage the child from learning and using standard English. The appropriate mode of speech at home is dialect, and standard English will not be used there.

This is another reason that teachers should never insinuate to the dialect-speaking child that his home language is "incorrect". While the point may seem obvious, it is extremely difficult to avoid such insinuations unless the teacher has a genuine respect for the child's home language as a medium of communication uniquely suited to the culture of his native country.

A teacher who appreciates Creole as a language in its own right also is less likely to discourage the use of dialect by the child. As we suggested earlier, discouraging the use of dialect before the child has learned to communicate effectively in standard English inhibits the child from expressing himself at all, and limits his opportunities to learn standard English through social interaction with his peers.

Teachers of immigrant children who find they are making little progress should consider inviting the child to write essays or poems in dialect. Once the habit of self expression has been instilled and the child feels he has something worth saying, he is more likely to make progress in acquiring standard English. (Many West Indian children, though, may write standard English although they speak Creole.)

Richard Light suggests that teachers who work with dialect-speaking children should have at the minimum:

A background in linguistics;

An appreciation of how language is learned;

An understanding that by the time they enter school all normal children regardless of cultural background, have a command of at least one language; and

An awareness that a new mode of speech should be taught as a supplementary mode rather than a replacive one. Ultimately the child will decide which mode to use on what occasion.

#### Misunderstandings

Finally, it should be noted that the similarity between standard English and West Indian dialects can lead to misunderstandings between the Canadian teacher and the West Indian child.

As we pointed out in an earlier section the Canadian teacher dealing with a West Indian child must be especially careful of faulty communication caused by different meanings conveyed by common words in West Indian dialects and in standard English. On the one hand such semantic misunderstandings can cause the teacher to conclude, wrongly, that the child is uncooperative or "slow"; on the other hand, the child may decide, equally wrongly, that the teacher is unreasonable, inconsistent or antagonistic.

"Don't be an idiot" may be only a mild reprimand to a Canadian child. A West Indian child could construe it as a grave insult.

Similarly, the word "indifferent" has a very mild perjorative meaning in standard English. However, to a Barbadian it means worthless and good-for-nothing. A Canadian teacher telling a West Indian parent his child appears to be "indifferent" in class may be surprised at the reaction.

Another source of confusion is the prevalence of inversions in West Indian speech, such as writing-hand for hand-writing and new-brand for brand-new. Confronted with inversions of this kind the Canadian teacher may assume the child is perceptually handicapped.

Unfortunately it is not possible to compile a list of loaded words the Canadian teacher should not use, nor is it possible to compile a list of words likely to be misunderstood. They are too numerous, and for the most part not documented.

It behoves the teacher to tread carefully and not to assume that his instructions are clear to the child or that his interpretations of the child's remarks are correct. Further, teachers should be alert for unexpected or exaggerated reactions on the part of the child to their apparently innocuous remarks and not draw hasty conclusions when a child appears to disregard an instruction.

## VII

THE ISSUE OF INTEGRATION

Much of this paper has been devoted to dealing with the cultural background of the West Indian child and to pointing out that actions which are aberrant in our culture are functional and normal in the home culture of the child.

In discussing the education of immigrant children it is especially easy to slip into the habit of thinking in terms of problems and solutions. From this point of view the fact that the West Indian child returns daily to a dialect-speaking home environment is a nuisance. The attitudes and habits of thought of the child's native culture are a hindrance and should be expunged.

This approach is manifestly unjust to the child. The child's early experiences are enriching and, if they are not suppressed, can only result in the development of a better-rounded individual. To attempt to suppress them may cause an identity-crisis for the child and create antagonism between parents and their children.

This is not to say that some actions and attitudes are not more easily accepted by Canadians than others, and insofar as the child can understand and meet the demands that will be made on him by Canadians, he will be able to cope with Canadian culture.

Cultural and social integration of the immigrant child should be seen in this light: It is an attempt to provide the child with an understanding of Canadian culture and the demands it makes, and a suitable repertoire of responses. Becoming Canadian need not and should not involve the denigration or eradication of cultural elements learned by the child in his homeland.

The Child

Bearing this in mind we may proceed to a discussion of some specific problems of adjustment noticed by teachers dealing with West Indian immigrant children.

Two widely disparate forms of behaviour have been reported: On the one hand some West Indian children are extremely quiet and withdrawn, and teachers find it difficult to persuade them to participate in class discussions and activities; on the other hand, some children are excessively boisterous and disruptive in class.

The passive and withdrawn child may be reacting to culture shock, nervousness and awe of his new surroundings. He needs time to make an adjustment and the process of bringing him out of his shell can only be encouraged, not forced.

Although his passivity may interfere with learning, the problem is primarily one of socialization, and academic progress cannot be expected until the child begins to feel secure and accepted in his new surroundings. This acceptance can come in many ways. For many children success in sports serves as a true catalyst. Because it is essential that the immigrant child should learn to feel at home in a Canadian environment it is probably unwise to separate West Indian children entirely from their Canadian peers by putting them into special reception classes with other immigrant children, though devoting part of the day to special classes should do no harm.

West Indian children may also be given a sense of self importance by devoting a lesson to the West Indies. Teachers who have tried this report the children respond well to their new-found stature as class expert.

Other methods of making West Indian children feel more at home in the Canadian school, which have been suggested by West Indians are:

- Having West Indian history and geography books in the classroom, as well as black history texts;
- Stressing the Commonwealth connection which links Canada and the West Indies;
- Using an older, better acculturated immigrant child as a big brother or sister.

It should also be remembered that passivity is fostered by the West Indian school, which places a heavy stress on discipline. In West Indian schools rules are numerous and strictly enforced. Girls, for example, are expected to be "ladylike" and refrain from laughing or giggling. Canadian girls appear brash to West Indian parents and their children.

A child who has had passivity drummed into him will inevitably take time to learn to participate in class. It may be particularly difficult for him to take part in class discussions, though he will likely feel freer to express himself in writing.

At the other end of the scale is the boisterous child. Much disruptive behaviour may be traced to a reaction against the discipline

practised in the West Indies. A child accustomed to a highly authoritarian school system may interpret the freer atmosphere in Canadian schools as laxness and respond by seeing how far he can go. Hopefully the testing period will be outgrown.

One junior kindergarten teacher noted both extremes of behaviour. She observed that West Indian children at that level appeared to lack gross motor co-ordination and be less mature than Canadian children of the same age.

The more passive children needed to be repeatedly reassured that the toys provided were there to be played with. Undoubtedly much of the lack of co-ordination observed stemmed from lack of previous experience in manipulating the equipment.

Other West Indian children appeared to have an excess of pent-up energy. A very simple explanation is that most of them were living in apartments where they were unable to indulge in the physical activities they were accustomed to in the West Indies. In many cases, being allowed to play on a jungle gym for ten minutes worked wonders.

Apart from so-called behavioural problems, there are certain academic areas that appear to present special problems to West Indian children.

The major problems which can be traced to language already have been discussed. West Indian children frequently turn up in remedial reading classes.

New maths also presents a problem to immigrant children brought up on a traditional mathematical diet which emphasizes computational skills, mental arithmetic and rote learning.

Sophisticated audio-visual aids or even simple overhead projectors may initially distract West Indian children. With younger children it may be necessary to point out that a map projected on a screen is no different from the familiar maps in books.

These difficulties stem from the lack of equipment in most West Indian schools. Similarly West Indian children who are unfamiliar with extensive libraries are unlikely to have developed the skills to do research on their own.

### The Parents

Because of the special problems immigrant children may have it is especially important that teachers and parents get together.

It is a particularly frustrating to the teacher, therefore, when the parent is difficult to contact or makes no contributions when a meeting is eventually arranged.

A frequent comment made by Canadian teachers who have dealt with West Indian immigrant children is that the parents appear content to leave the education of their children entirely to the schools. They seem to show little interest or involvement.

There are several factors at work here. The most obvious, perhaps, is that immigrants, more than natives, are likely to need two breadwinners to make ends meet, with, possibly, a little moonlighting on the side. Immigrants characteristically hold jobs that pay less, and are less desirable in terms of hours, geographical location and conditions of work. In addition the immigrant not only is trying to establish an economic base from scratch but frequently is remitting money home to relatives in the West Indies. Demands on his time are heavy.

It must also be remembered that most West Indians attended formal and authoritarian schools themselves, where parental involvement was not sought or encouraged. After a childhood spent in such an authoritarian school system, the parent feels inadequate to confront his child's teachers.

In the West Indies parental involvement is usually expressed in raising money to buy equipment for the schools. A West Indian parent viewing the lavish equipment of a Canadian school may well conclude he has no role to play.

Despite the difficulties it is extremely important that every effort be made to establish a line of communication between the teacher and the parent.

As we pointed out in an earlier section, the abundance of equipment may lead a West Indian parent to expect rapid, almost automatic progress by the child.

The easiest way of getting the parent to understand that unfamiliar equipment may be more help than hindrance is to bring the parent to the school while classes are in progress. If it can be arranged, several teachers have reported, this exposure produces far better results than a simple interview.

There are certain times when it is obviously especially important that the parent should be thoroughly familiar with his child's educational needs and problems. One of these is when the child's initial entry point into the system is decided upon. If it is recommended that a West Indian child attend a vocational school, great care must be taken to explain to the parents that skilled trades are not held in contempt in Canada. Vocational training, and even such professions as nursing, are looked down upon by many West Indians who consider them a very poor second to white-collar professions.

There is a crying need for cultural brokers to act as go-betweens, liaising between the West Indian parent and the white school system. The ideal go-between is a West Indian teacher but, unfortunately, there are few of these in local schools. Black staff members of American or Canadian descent often are more successful than whites in explaining the local school system and West Indian parents feel freer to question them. West Indian children, too, often show a marked preference for confiding in black staff members.

#### Fostering Integration

We have suggested that until the cultural and social integration of the child has reached an advanced stage academic proficiency cannot be expected. The difficulty lies in finding means to accelerate the enculturization and socialization process.

A method that has met with some success uses West Indian volunteers, who are themselves senior high-school students or recent graduates to work with recently-arrived immigrant children in a big brother or big sister relationship. West Indian students in post-secondary programs at universities, community colleges and professional schools may be another source of volunteers.

Summer projects, possibly sponsored by Opportunity For Youth grants, may be the simplest method of initiating such programs and have the added advantage that immigrants traditionally arrive in Canada during the summer.

Assimilation of the immigrant child could begin before the child entered the Canadian school system.

A program of this kind, using volunteers with Canadian backgrounds, mostly from the West Indian community, was undertaken in Toronto in the summer of 1972. It involved 75 youngsters and was financed by a federal government OFY grant. The classes were designed to bridge the gap between West Indian and Canadian education.

Concentration was on reading, modern mathematics and science subjects, which the co-ordinators of the program felt were the most difficult areas for West Indian children. In addition the children were taught about the achievement of prominent blacks to encourage pride in their background.

Another program called Black Education Project has been operating in the city since 1969 using volunteer teachers and workers. Unlike the previously-mentioned Headstart program the BEP is financed by money donated by the black community.

Another Toronto program to speed up the integration of immigrants is Main Street school, established in 1965. Although the prime object of the school is to speed up the acquisition of English by immigrant children in the 12 to 18 year age group, the theory behind the scheme is that the problems of immigrants are cultural as much as linguistic. Basically Main Street provides second-language education in English, but it strives to couple this with complete immersion in Canadian things. If the student becomes committed to Canadian society, so the theory goes, a need to communicate is generated and learning English becomes an easier process.

Although Main Street claims some successes, it is probable the cultural immersion concept is better suited to and more necessary for older students than younger children, who have not been so thoroughly steeped in their home culture.

Another drawback is that Main Street is expensive. It costs roughly four times as much to put a child through the school's program of cultural immersion as it would to have the child attend special classes for part of the day at a regular school.

Finally, it should be noted that the most effective way of integrating the child is to encourage the integration of the parent. This has the important advantage of avoiding the family tensions that can be generated when children embrace a new culture and parents cling to their former one.

Unfortunately, facilities which could aid in integrating West Indian adults in Toronto seem to be seriously limited. They break down into three areas: Ethnic social clubs, churches and extension courses of an educational or cultural-immersion nature. The value of black social clubs in assisting in the integration of West Indians and other coloured immigrants is dubious. West Indians who were interviewed on the subject had mixed reactions. While a few felt such clubs help to bridge the cultural gap, the majority feared segregated clubs increase feelings of separateness and inferiority.

The major problem is encouraging West Indian children and adults to participate fully in Canadian life is to overcome their feelings of isolation and their fear of being rebuffed.

Canadianization programs have been suggested and some have been established. However, these too are potential sources of conflict. At the very least, if such a program is set up in a school, every effort must be made to involve West Indians in its organization.

Churches, too, do not appear very effective in helping West Indians to bridge the gap between their native and adopted cultures, which is rather surprising when we consider the religious orientation of many West Indians. The main reason for the failure of the churches appears to be difference in the style of services in Canada and the West Indies. Canadian services seem cold and formal and often make West Indians so uncomfortable they abandon the church entirely or change denominations.

In the latter case the denominations chosen are usually smaller revivalist-type sects which do not represent the mainstream of Canadian life and are, therefore, not particularly good media of socialization.

Surveys in Britain have shown that, after church-going, educational and training classes are the most popular organized activities among West Indian migrants and form a significant part of their social interaction with the natives.

Such classes serve a dual purpose: They are a means of attaining better jobs through upgrading the immigrant's qualifications and they boost the individual's sense of self-worth. Many migrants do not have an opportunity to acquire higher academic and technical qualifications in the West Indies.

The British surveys showed one West Indian in ten was taking an extra-mural course, usually one with a strong vocational bias. The women most frequently reported attending typing, sewing and knitting classes, while the men were interested in engineering, carpentry and other vocational-skill courses. Few "cultural" courses were being taken. Extension courses as a means of introducing the migrant to the customs of his host country apparently have their limitations. The British surveys cast doubts on the efficacy of "citizenship" courses, designed to introduce the immigrant to the culture of the host country, as a force for social and cultural integration. It appears likely that the most effective integrating means of the West Indian migrant may be through courses which offer a vocational-skill inducement - unless the generally higher level of training of West Indian migrants to Canada makes such skills courses less necessary and useful to them.

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APPENDIX A  
MAP OF THE WEST INDIES

See Next Page

Gulf of Mexico

FLORIDA

BAHAMAS ISLANDS  
(GR. BR.)

CUBA

CAYMAN ISLANDS  
(JAM.)

HAITI  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

JAMAICA  
Kingston

HISPANIOLA

BRITISH HONDURAS

Caribbean Sea

CENTRAL AMERICA

COSTA RICA

Atlantic Ocean

LEWIS ISLANDS (GR. BR.)  
TURKS ISLANDS (GR. BR.)

ANTIGUA  
ST. KITTS  
MONTserrat  
GUADALOUPE (FR.)  
LEWIS ISLANDS (GR. BR.)

DOMINICA

VIENNA (FR.)  
ST. LUCIA  
BARBADOS  
St. Vincent  
St. Johnstown

GRENADA

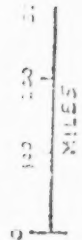
TOBAGO  
Port of Spain  
TRINIDAD

SOUTH AMERICA

GUYANA

Georgetown

Pacific Ocean



APPENDIX BNUMBER OF WEST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

By mid-1966, 25,000 West Indians had migrated to Canada. Though there is no systematic record of where they went, approximately half are believed to have settled in Ontario, most in Toronto.<sup>26</sup>

In 1967, '68 and '69 the numbers of immigrants was 8,403, 7,563 and 13,093,<sup>26</sup> respectively.

Thus, rather more immigrants arrived after 1966 than before. Extrapolating, it seems likely there are about 70,000 West Indian immigrants in Canada, at a conservative estimate, most having arrived within the past six years. Of these, between 50 and 60 per cent indicated on entry they wished to settle in Toronto.<sup>26</sup>

APPENDIX C

58.

WEST INDIAN BORN CHILDREN IN YORK BOROUGH SCHOOLS 1970-71

|             | JK | SK | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | Spec.<br>Ed. | TOTAL |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------|-------|
| ANTIGUA     | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |              | 1     |
| ARUBA       |    |    |    |    |    | 2  |    | 1  | 1  |    |              | 4     |
| BAHAMAS     |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |              | 2     |
| BARBADOS    | 3  | 2  | 5  | 6  | 4  | 11 | 7  | 3  | 3  | 6  |              | 50    |
| CURACAO     |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |              | 1     |
| DOMINICA    |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |              | 1     |
| GRENADA     |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |              | 1     |
| GUYANA      | 6  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 2  | 2  |              | 29    |
| JAMAICA     | 16 | 32 | 24 | 33 | 35 | 24 | 29 | 24 | 20 | 18 | 3            | 258   |
| ST. KITTS   |    |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  |    |              | 4     |
| ST. VINCENT | 1  | 1  | 2  | 5  | 2  | 1  |    | 4  | 2  | 2  |              | 20    |
| TRINIDAD    | 2  | 12 | 18 | 16 | 16 | 13 | 8  | 12 | 4  | 8  | 2            | 111   |
| WEST INDIES |    |    | 1  |    | 2  | 2  | 1  |    |    |    |              | 6     |
| TOTAL       | 29 | 48 | 53 | 63 | 62 | 57 | 49 | 51 | 35 | 37 | 5            | 489   |

APPENDIX D  
A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE WEST INDIES

To the Canadian vacationing in the tropics, the West Indies are balmy, easy-going lands. Their inhabitants are apparently free of the stresses of North American society, even indolent - which indolence, travel - writers will add, is certainly not a reflection on the people, but a sensible adaptation to the enervating effects of a tropical climate.

This is the stuff of which myths are made. Whatever the rationalization, many of us stereotype the people of the tropics as leisurely, easy-going and generous, and living in a bountiful land where the necessities of life are easily acquired.

The reality is often quite different. Typically the tropical countries have small per capita incomes laboriously earned by manual labour in primary industry or agriculture. The majority of the people have no choice but to work at tasks which are physically taxing and repetitive. Frequently tropical countries have only one major product and their economies are at the mercy of the vagaries of the world market. Even when prices are high the rewards trickle back to the labourer by such circuitous routes that he seldom benefits. When the market slumps subsistence farming is the only recourse.

What appears to be indolence or a sensible adaptation to the climate to the outsider, may be the effects of malnutrition, a different work cycle, a seasonal cycle of production or simply the appreciation that extra work will produce a negligible return.

In this respect the West Indian lands are not much different from other tropical countries. The primary products may vary, but most West Indian countries rely on one or two products for their economic stability. Secondary industry is a recent innovation and quite limited. Population on most West Indian islands is extremely dense and competition for jobs intense. Most West Indians are doomed to a lifetime of manual labour or, at the best, low-paying white-collar work.

Furthermore, as a Jamaican reader pointed out, the reality of life in the West Indies is often urban, industrial, and stressful. One-quarter of Jamaicans live in Kingston, for example, where, according to one commentator "the tempo of life has long ceased to be leisurely and easy-going, where... [people] once accepted their poverty [but] ...now scrape aggressively for a living."

So far we have spoken of the West Indies as if they are a homogenous group of countries. Although they share many qualities, each of the islands and mainland territories that make up the West Indies has its distinctive character. Even among the islands that sweep southwards from the southern United States to the northern coast of South America there are climatic variations, and the mainland countries of British Honduras and Guyana, are further affected by their positions on the body of continental America. In addition to the physical differences the countries of the West Indies have individual histories, natural resources and cultures that make them unique entities and justify their political autonomy.

The people of the West Indies are as diverse as their countries. The stock combines African, East Indian, European and aboriginal Indian and Chinese and Syrian ancestry, with the first three predominating. All combinations of these strains may be found. Spain, Holland, England and France all colonized areas of the West Indies, imposing their cultures, their languages and their religions.

The Africans were imported as slave labour for the plantation owners when the islands first were developed. After emancipation the East Indians were brought in as indentured labourers. It is fair to say the racial, national, linguistic and religious complexity of the West Indies is unique in the world.

The West Indian countries which have contributed the most immigrants to Canada are Jamaica, Trinidad-Tobago, Barbados and Guyana. A brief introduction to the histories and circumstances of these countries; a discussion of the institution of slavery, which affected some islands more, others less; and a very brief account of the place of race, caste and colour in the Caribbean follow.

# 1. History and Facts about:

## (a) Jamaica

Jamaica is the largest of the three islands we are looking at, and has the largest population. It is sandwiched between the islands of Cuba in the north, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) in the east and the Central American mainland in the west. There are about two million Jamaicans living on the island's 4,500 square miles - a density of 280 persons per square mile. Like other West Indian islands Jamaica is one of the peaks of a submerged mountain range and it is crossed by a spur of mountains. In temperature, luxuriant vegetation and fertility Jamaica approximates closely to one's image of the ideal tropical island.

Columbus landed on the island in 1494 and in 1505 it was officially colonized by Spain. The indigenous inhabitants of the island, the Arawak Indians, rapidly disappeared under the cruel and harsh conditions of Spanish rule and Africans were imported to be slaves. In 1655, after 150 years of Spanish domination, an English expeditionary force attacked the West Indies and soon after the Spanish settlers abandoned Jamaica. The administration of the island was reorganized by the British with a legislative council being introduced. Sugar plantations boomed and more enslaved Africans were imported to work them. Jamaica became known as a haunt of buccaneers and slave traders. In 1833 the slaves were emancipated and the foundations of Jamaica, as it is today, were laid.

The present racial composition of Jamaica reflects its history. Over 75 per cent of Jamaicans are of West African origin, while there are British, Chinese, East Indians and minorities from continental European countries. Literacy is about 80 per cent. The predominant denominations are Baptist, Methodist and Anglican.

Jamaican economy, based on sugar cane, bananas and coffee until the 1950's, has diversified with two major new industries - the exploitation of the island's bauxite resources and the growth of tourism. Jamaica became independent in 1962 and secondary industries now are being developed, but the major exports are still primary products - bauxite, aluminum, sugar and bananas. Exports have a tendency to fall behind imports - in 1971 exports totalled about Jamaican \$276.2 million, while imports stood at Jamaican \$458.7 million, which makes for a precarious balance of payments.

Partly because of its large population more Jamaicans have emigrated in the past than other West Indians. In Canada, where West Indians amounted to five per cent of all immigrants in 1969, Jamaicans made up the majority until 1968. In 1969 the number of immigrants from Trinidad-Tobago soared, putting Jamaica in second place.

The actual figures in 1969 (according to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa) were 5,631 immigrants from Trinidad-Tobago, 3,889 from Jamaica and 1,242 from Barbados with other West Indian countries contributing much smaller numbers.<sup>26</sup>

(b) Trinidad-Tobago

In 1969 more immigrants came to Canada from Trinidad and Tobago than any other West Indian country. The twin islands, which form a single political unit, lie at the extreme southern tip of the West Indies with Trinidad only seven miles from the coast of Venezuela. Like Venezuela, Trinidad has rich oil deposits and is a large exporter of oil.

Trinidad is the larger of the two islands - nearly 2,000 square miles in area, or half the size of Jamaica. The population is also about half Jamaica's, or just under a million, and is extremely cosmopolitan. About 43 per cent of the people are of African descent, 36 per cent are East Indian, two per cent are of European descent, and one per cent are Chinese, with the balance mixed.

The colonization of Trinidad followed the visit by Columbus, in 1498, but it remained a Spanish possession for much longer than Jamaica. The island was captured by the British in 1797 and was ruled as a colony until independence in 1962.

There always have been a number of French settlers on Trinidad and the French and Spanish influences are still strong. This is reflected in the religion, which is mainly Roman Catholic. Just as there is a patois in Jamaica, there is a French-English dialect spoken in Trinidad, together with Spanish which is spoken in places in the mountains.

Tobago, the sister island, is 20 miles away and much smaller than Trinidad.

The major agricultural export of Trinidad-Tobago is sugar but the island's economy is based on oil, and oil exports account for nearly 80 per cent of the total. Annual per capita income at about \$550 in 1970 is high for the West Indies.<sup>14\*</sup>

When the British took Trinidad from Spain the island was inhabited largely by French and Spanish settlers. Trinidad never was a slave economy on the scale of Jamaica, largely because the sugar plantations developed later on Trinidad than on the other islands - not until the 19th century.

By then supplies of slaves were drying up, so the planters of Trinidad had recourse to indentured labour from the East Indies instead. This accounts for the much higher proportion of East Indians in Trinidad.

#### (c) Barbados

Barbados is the most easterly of the West Indian islands and has the most temperate climate. It is much smaller than Jamaica or Trinidad-Tobago. The population of 245,000 is densely packed, 1,163 persons to the square mile or eight times as dense as Jamaica or Trinidad. The island is 21 miles long and 14 at its greatest width.

Unlike the other islands we have discussed, Barbados has been continuously under British rule since it was colonized in 1625. It became independent in 1966. As a result Barbadians, perhaps more than any other West Indians, consider themselves British. Literacy is extremely high (over 90%) and the predominant denomination is Anglican.

As is the case with all the West Indian islands tourism is a major industry. The major export is sugar, which accounts for just over half the island's total exports.

#### (d) Guyana

Although Guyana is on the mainland of South America it shares a common history and background with the West Indies. Its South American neighbours do not regard the country as belonging to Latin America.

\* one reader points out that while per capita figures are not impressive, they do correspond to a relatively high living standard, by West Indian criteria.

Together with Surinam and French Guiana, Guyana is unique in South America in having been settled by a Northern European power instead of Spain or Portugal, and having remained a colony long after the rest of the continent gained independence.

The three enclaves on the South American coast that are the Guianas were ignored by Portugal and Spain because they offered no obvious material wealth. England, France and Holland, however, were keen to establish footholds on the continent and were not so particular.

Apart from their cultural uniqueness, the Guianas are separated from the rest of South America by precipitous mountains which have effectively isolated them from the mainstream of Latin American life.

The three territories were first settled by the Dutch in 1596. In 1613 the British established a base and in 1626 the French took possession of Cayenne. In 1667 the British bartered their territory in the Guianas for Dutch New Amsterdam, now New York, but during the French revolution the three colonies saw several changes of ownership. The present division was agreed upon after 1814.

Like the other Guianas, Guyana has a narrow flat marshy belt along the coast backed by rough uplands beyond which are the Guiana Highlands. Many of the mountains in this range soar to 9,000 feet. Mount Roraima, where Brazil, Venezuela and Guyana meet is 8,630 feet high. Its rugged isolation inspired Conan Doyle's *Lost World*.

Although the Guianas lie in the basins of many rivers and streams which flow into the Atlantic, the waterways are not navigable beyond the coastal plain.

The Guianas are prototypical tropical countries with the highest annual temperatures in South America. The inhospitable land had few indigenous natives, so when sugar, coffee and rice plantations were established enslaved Africans were brought in to work them. Later East Indians, Javanese and Chinese arrived as indentured labourers.

Today less than 1.4 per cent of the Guyanese population, or about 8,000 is of European origin. By contrast there are 332,000 East Indians and 203,000 people of African descent out of a total population of 638,000.

Before slavery was abolished under British rule over 300 years later, millions of slaves made the crossing from West Africa to the Caribbean and people of African descent soon constituted the majority in the islands.

Ashanti words are still found in the dialects of Jamaica as in Anansi, a folk hero (spider man) of West Africa; Kumina, an African folk dance has survived in rural Jamaica; and much of the voodoo cult (especially in Haiti) harks back directly to West Africa. However, despite such survivals, the methods of the slave traders who took their booty indiscriminately from different tribes and split up families ensured no continuous culture was transplanted to the West Indies. The slaves rapidly lost much of their African heritage. They became people without a culture of their own, exposed to a part of the culture of their masters, but without access to most of its more privileged status roles. West Indian culture today retains many Africanisms - in language, music, and religion; but within West Indian society European cultural patterns predominate and are associated with status and prestige.

(b) Its Effects

One of the most noticeable effects of this is that West Indians have traditionally considered themselves to be British and thought of British things - like the British educational system - as the ultimate in excellence. Most West Indian immigrants to Britain in the 1950's and early 1960's expected automatic acceptance and integration, so the reality of poverty, ghettos and prejudice were all the more cruel.

If there is such a thing as a West Indian attitude towards Canada it is related to our status as a Commonwealth member and one where there is supposed to be relatively little colour prejudice. Many West Indians, looking for a place to emigrate to after the British door was shut by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, were predisposed by such considerations to come to Canada.

The area of Guyana is 83,000 square miles and by West Indian standards the ratio of population to area is not heavy. However, the figures are misleading because much of the land is of little use and the majority of the population is concentrated in the comparatively small area of the coastal plain.

The birthrate is 42.4 per thousand, compared to about 22 per thousand for Canada. Although the infant mortality rate is extremely high at 61.6 per thousand, the population increases by 3.4 per cent a year and the national income is hard put to keep pace.

Apart from the crops already mentioned, the economy depends largely on bauxite, gold and diamond deposits in the mountains. Guyana relies heavily on its natural resources and primary products.

The few secondary industries that have been established, many of them since Guyana gained independence in 1966, include ship-building, general engineering, manufacture of edible oils, margarine and soap. In terms of its readily-available resources the country is overpopulated and jobs are hard to come by.

Because of the long association with England the language of the country is predominantly English, though usually spoken in dialect form in typical West Indian fashion.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Slavery

The story of slavery in the West Indies is the story of sugar. The Indians Columbus found in the islands, the peaceful Arawaks and the warlike Caribs, were largely exterminated by the early settlers. Some were enslaved, but they did not take readily to slavery and died en masse.

### (a) Its History

Sugar was introduced to the islands on Columbus' second voyage. It immediately became apparent the climate and soil were ideal for sugar cane. The problem was to find sufficient labour to exploit the new resource and supplement the dwindling Indians. In 1518 Charles V authorized the importation of slaves from Africa and the die was cast. The future growth of the West Indies has been decided.

### 3. Race, Caste and Colour

The long-term effects of slavery have been insidious and have moulded the characteristics of the West Indies and their people irrevocably. Although slavery, as such, was abolished well over a century ago the patterns of power and prestige established by the system permeate the entire social fabric.

#### (a) Its History

Under the plantation system a tradition of "two nations" developed - two separate groups of people living in the same land but with scarcely any social contact or cultural unity.

On the one hand the bulk of the population was slaves, without rights, whose African culture and beliefs were rapidly eroding; on the other hand the planter class, with European customs and a European culture, were rich, leisured and white-skinned. Between the two groups a third was quickly established: those of mixed parentage, who in colour, status and wealth occupied a middle position.

The one group spoke Creole and the other two French and English. The schism remained after emancipation in the 1830's. The darker-skinned West Indian became a peasant farmer while his lighter-skinned countryman gravitated into the European-oriented group of officials and professional workers and formed, until recently, the whole of the middle-class.

In the West Indies wealth, power and privilege always have been correlated with colour of skin.\* Even today a Jamaican recognizes at least half a dozen separate groups, based on lightness of skin, and judges social standing by the degree of whiteness. The importance of colour may have originated in its coincidence with degrees of wealth; but its importance is real.

The association of a fair skin with a higher status and greater opportunities is so engrained that many West Indians deliberately have tried to marry people of lighter hue in the hope that their off-spring will have a better chance than they enjoyed. The recent emergence of "Black is Beautiful" as a slogan of racial pride in North America has strongly affected the old colour caste ranking system in the West Indies, but it has not erased it.

\* There are exceptions - whites who are poor and disrespected, and blacks who are neither.

(b) Its Effects

It is easy for us to reject the notion that colour of skin and racial origin are linked to ability. To the West Indian the empirical evidence supports the tradition that lighter-skinned people are more successful and, by implication, more likely to succeed. No doubt the tradition has been deliberately fostered by propaganda in many cases, but the net effect is that to many West Indians, competition between black and white is unequal and unrealistic. This can be a tremendous psychological handicap for the immigrant to overcome when he finds himself competing with white men, for the same jobs and material goods, as Donald Hinds describes when a Jamaican confronts for the first time white British porters meeting the boat-train from the West Indies, carrying the bags and accepting the tips of the black immigrants.<sup>3</sup>

The damaging effects of hierarchies based on race have been well documented.

Bowker points out that prejudiced theories about the attributes of certain groups may be held by children who are, themselves, members of those groups. For example, Black pupils in mixed U.S. schools have been found to have a self-image close to the "Negro" stereotype accepted by whites.

This feeling of self-hatred and disdain for their own group may lead to severe forms of maladjustment culminating in mental illness. In the U.S. Black children have been found to have more negative self-concepts than white children, including, passivity, moroseness and fear.<sup>15</sup>

In this regard it should be noted a high incidence of mental illness has been found among West Indian immigrants (compared to natives) in Britain.<sup>15</sup>